





THE APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION.

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A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF LAMBETH PALACE,

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1842,

AT

THE CONSECRATION

OF THE

RIGHT REV. ASHURST TURNER,

LORD BISHOP OF CHICHESTER.

BY

EDWARD HAWKINS, D.D.

PROVOST OF ORIEL COLLEGE, AND CANON OF ROCHESTER.

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TO  
THE MOST REVEREND  
WILLIAM  
LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

THE FOLLOWING SERMON,

PRINTED BY COMMAND OF HIS GRACE,

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH PROFOUND RESPECT,

BY HIS GRACE'S OBLIGED AND MOST FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE Sermon is printed exactly as it was preached. A few Notes have been subjoined, with the hope of supplying, not indeed an adequate discussion of the theological question under review, but such indications of its nature and bearings as may make the Publication somewhat more useful and interesting to Christian readers in general.





## 2 TIM. I. 6, 7.

WHEREFORE I PUT THEE IN REMEMBRANCE THAT THOU STIR UP THE GIFT OF GOD, WHICH IS IN THEE BY THE PUTTING ON OF MY HANDS. FOR GOD HATH NOT GIVEN US THE SPIRIT OF FEAR; BUT OF POWER, AND OF LOVE, AND OF A SOUND MIND.

WHEN we reflect but for a moment upon the nature of man and of God, His holiness, our sinfulness, our spiritual necessities, and His mercies, we cannot, without the liveliest gratitude, join in the solemn services of this day, or listen to a text implying similar rites on the same occasion in the very days of the Apostles. The present and the past are intimately joined together, and we have a standing monument of the never-ceasing care of our Lord for His Church.

Of all external observances, indeed, under the Gospel, the most deeply interesting is that sacred rite in which the sinful child of sinful parents is restored to the favour of his Maker, incorporated into the Church of our Redeemer, born again of water and of the Spirit, made the son of God, and heir of eternal life. And, were it not for the very frequency of its observance, the next in interest, as well as intrinsic importance, would be that other Divine institution in which the faithful members of

Christ feed on a banquet of most heavenly food, renew their strength, and enter into closer and closer communion and oneness with the Church and with its Head. But second only to these Divine appointments are the Apostolic rites by which Ministers of the Word and Sacraments, Rulers and Pastors of the flock, are duly ordered and consecrated, the form and polity of the Church constituted and preserved, and provision is made at once for the nurture and instruction of all its members, and for the extension of the Church itself throughout every country under heaven.

And what if the sacred ceremonial of this day is not merely observed in imitation of the Apostles, and under their sanction, but is essentially of Apostolic appointment? What if, in every living branch of the Church of Christ, the succession of Bishops duly consecrated has been maintained without interruption from the days of the Apostles to our own, and there can be no true Church without the Sacraments, no Sacraments without the Priesthood, no Christian Priesthood without Episcopacy, no Apostolic Episcopacy without this unbroken succession from the Apostles themselves?

Such are the views sometimes entertained of the APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION.

It is plain that their unreserved adoption will invest the services in which we are engaged, not merely with a deep religious interest, but with

unspeakable awfulness and mystery. Whilst, so various are our turns of mind, some may have been disposed to entertain these sentiments, and others to reject them, for the very sake of the mystery. And thus the whole subject of the Apostolic Succession, intimately connected as it is with very many questions affecting both our own position as Christians and that of others, abroad and at home, is not unlikely to be variously coloured according to the different constitution of different minds. And some brief consideration, accordingly, first of the *Facts* connected with it, then of the *Doctrine*, may be neither inappropriate to this occasion nor wholly useless; not diverting our minds from piety and prayer to vain subtilties or bitter contention, but rather disposing them, under the Divine blessing, to true and lively apprehensions of our Privileges, our Duties, and our Hopes.

I. As to the FACTS of the case there are obviously two principal questions to be considered:—whether there have actually been, from the days of the Apostles to our own, *these three Orders* which we recognise in the Christian ministry, *Bishops, Priests, and Deacons*;—and, again, whether *the succession to these sacred offices*, and more especially to the Episcopate, has been continually preserved pure and uninterrupted.

1. Now, let us direct our view to what quarter we may, throughout the whole extent of Western Christendom, and, so far as I am aware, amongst the various branches also of the Eastern Church, there are existing at this day, in every Episcopal community, very distinct and easily to be recognised, the three offices of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. There are many other Titles, no doubt, in the several Churches, of Office or Pre-eminence, Patriarch, Primate, Archdeacon, Curate, and the like, but they do not obscure the well-known character of those three offices. If the system has not always been adequately developed—if our Colonies, for example, have been almost unprovided with Ministers of more than one order, or excessive Parishes at home have sometimes almost overwhelmed the Christian Minister with duties not his own—still the system itself is neither concealed nor lost. And although there are also, and we greatly lament it, some Protestant Churches and Communities which have even lost or rejected the Episcopal Order, yet these exceptions, and the discussions to which they have led, only make the general fact the more conspicuous and indisputable.

But, again, if we ascend only three hundred years, there were no exceptions of the kind. All the Churches of the West, however unsound in doctrine or discipline, were at that period, it is admitted, under the same Episcopal government, and recognised universally the same Ministerial



Orders which it is our blessing to have retained. Nay, even the Churches which ceased to be Episcopal, or several, at least, of their most distinguished members, as Melancthon, Luther, Beza, even Calvin, lamented the supposed necessity of their loss, or bore their testimony to the value and importance of Apostolical Episcopacy.<sup>a</sup> And, tracing the history of Christianity upwards from this period towards its source, we cannot doubt the universal adoption of the threefold Institution of the Christian Ministry in every Church continuously up to the second century after Christ.

But the historical testimony to the fact in question does not stop here. There is no limit, indeed, to the universal reception of the Orders of Presbyter and Deacon; it is coeval with the first planting of the Churches of Christ:<sup>b</sup> and if we cannot assert, as I think we cannot,<sup>c</sup> that at the close of the first century every considerable Church had its Bishop as well as its Presbyters and Deacons, still there is at least abundant evidence that it was the general

<sup>a</sup> See several testimonies to this effect, of these and other French and German divines, cited by Bishop Hall, "Episcopacy by Divine Right," part i. § ii. § iii. § iv. See also many of them briefly summed up in Note K to an excellent Sermon by Bishop Russell, upon "the Historical Evidence for the Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy." (3d Edit. 1839.) See also Confession of Augsburg, p. 150. Sylloge Confessionum. (1804.)

<sup>b</sup> Acts vi. ; xiv. 23 ; xv. 2, &c.

<sup>c</sup> For the Church of Corinth, whatever may have been the cause, appears, I conceive, from the Epistle of Clement to have been an exception.

practice. And that evidence extends to the very age of the Apostles. The earliest Ecclesiastical Historians enumerate the first Bishops of the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, Alexandria, Rome, and trace them in each instance from the Apostles.<sup>d</sup> Polycarp is expressly said to have been ordained Bishop of the Church in Smyrna by the Apostles; and Ignatius Bishop of Antioch within the life-time of some of the Apostles.<sup>e</sup> Thus the well-known and decisive evidence of both these Fathers, although written in the second century, belongs virtually to the first. And we have the broadest historical proof of the antiquity and universality even of Episcopacy itself; its universal reception so early as the second century; its general adoption earlier still; its antiquity and origin traceable up to Apostolic times and to the Apostles themselves.

Even this, however, is not the whole of the case. It is Scriptural testimony which crowns the argument from Ecclesiastical History; and Scriptural testimony by no means precarious or obscure, if only we read it, as we may and should, by the clear light of past facts and present experience.<sup>f</sup> We

<sup>d</sup> Hegesippus and Eusebius. See Euseb. l. ii. c. 24; iii. 2, 14, &c.; iv. i. 22. Bingham's Eccles. Antiquities, book ii. c. i. § 3, § 4. Waddington's History of the Church, part i. c. ii. p. 21.

<sup>e</sup> A.D. 69. Euseb. l. iii. c. 22. 36. iv. 14. (after Irenæus.) See Bishop Russell's Sermon, above referred to, p. 25, 29, and Note F.

<sup>f</sup> To take the contrary method is the ready way to involve the

shall not then be perplexed by an apparent confusion of titles, Apostles, Prophets, Bishops, Presbyters, which had not at once become strictly appropriated and technical ;<sup>s</sup> we shall look beyond words to facts, beyond titles to functions and offices ; and we shall clearly perceive, in the very infancy of Christianity, the two distinct Ecclesiastical Offices of Presbyter and Deacon, and the Apostles manifestly exercising spiritual jurisdiction over both ; and then, as their term of trial drew towards its close, and the Churches multiplied, we observe the only Apostle of whose labours we have any full report delegating to others, not indeed any extraordinary functions, not the office of bearing witness to Christ and His resurrection, (in which character the Apostles have no successors,) but such portions of his own office as could be committed to uninspired men,—authority to reprove, rebuke, exhort, to maintain sound doctrine, reject the heretic, lay on hands, continue a

whole subject in gratuitous difficulties. And yet, observes Bishop Russell, this method has “ been made the principal ground on which arguments against the Apostolical institution of Episcopacy have been supported.”—Sermon, p. 14. The advocates for Episcopacy, however, commonly begin with the Scriptural account of it ; as Bishop Taylor, and Bishop Hall, and even Bishop Russell, notwithstanding his sense of the difficulty arising from the attempt to unfold the meaning of Scriptural terms before they had acquired their present technical senses.

<sup>s</sup> Compare 1 Pet. v. 1 ; ii. 25. 2 John 1. 3 John 1. Phil. i. 1. Acts xx. 17, 28. 1 Tim. iii. 1—7, 8—13. 2 Tim. iv. 5, 11. Tit. i. 5—7. 1 Cor. iii. 5 ; xii. 28—30. Eph. iv. 11.

succession of faithful teachers, judge of the qualifications of Presbyters and Deacons, appoint Elders in every city—the very functions, in a word, which are committed to Bishops at the present day.<sup>h</sup>

Let the details of the picture, of which the mere outline has thus been delineated, be supplied, (as, indeed, several in this congregation will have tacitly supplied them as we proceeded;) and the truth of that modest position of the Church of England will be securely established—“It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles’ time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ’s Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.”<sup>i</sup>

2. But the second question of fact is by no means identical with this. The permanency of *the Institution* is distinct from the exact succession of the *Individuals*. There might be a constant succession of Officers, indeed, as of the Judges in our Courts of Law, without any conveyance of the Commission itself from one to another; and, supposing the Commission to be usually thus transmitted, as in the Ministry of the Church, still the Institution might be preserved, yet Individuals, appa-

<sup>h</sup> Compare Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17, &c. Rom. i. 11, 14; 2 Cor. xi. 28. Phil. i. 1. 1 Tim. i. 3; ii. 1, 8, 9, 12; iii. 1—15; iv. 6, 11, 12, 14; v. 1. 7, 17, 19, 20, 22. 2 Tim. ii. 2; iv. 1, 2, 5, 6. Tit. i. 5—14; ii. 15; iii. 10.

<sup>i</sup> Preface to the Ordination Services.



rently acting under it, might be unduly appointed, or usurp their functions. Thus, it does not immediately follow, that, because these Orders of Ministers have ever existed in Christ's Church, therefore *the Succession of Ministers, and these duly ordained and consecrated Ministers*, has been uniformly maintained pure and uninterrupted; no single link in the chain defective, which would make the chain no longer one; no defect, for example, in the consecration of some one Bishop which might vitiate or invalidate every succeeding ordination;—yet this is what is commonly understood by the Apostolic Succession, an actual transmission of orders, unbroken and uncontaminated, throughout the whole line from the Apostles to ourselves.

And the proof of such a fact as this will be different also. That there have ever been Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, would be proved, as an historical certainty, by a sufficient number of notices of the fact at successive periods in Histories, Laws, Canons, and the like, excluding all suspicion that the Church of Christ existed at any period without them. But the same or similar evidence will by no means exclude every suspicion of some irregularity in some one instance during many centuries; and it is obvious that authentic documents, and direct testimony, to prove the fact in every instance, cannot be supplied.

Hence our attention is often called to the dark and stormy periods of the Church, rival claims,

turbulent elections, consecration of infants, as sufficient indications that the uninterrupted transmission of Episcopacy is at once unlikely to be true, and incapable of proof.<sup>k</sup> And were it, indeed, requisite, in order to a true succession, that every individual, throughout every series, should have received first his Baptism, and then each succeeding commission in the Ministry, by the appointment and at the hands of Ministers themselves episcopally ordained, such a purity of succession would, no doubt, be neither capable of proof nor probable.<sup>1</sup> But if something less strict than this is to be understood, if prior defects are cured by subsequent acts, and irregular elections are not supposed, as surely they are not, to invalidate the subsequent consecration, and the point really in question is only the due conveyance of their Commission to Bishops and Presbyters, then the unbroken succession, although incapable of positive proof, is not unlikely to be true, because the very mode of Ordination, or Consecration, has almost guaranteed the correct transmission of Sacred offices.

Thus usually, though not universally, the office of the Presbyter has been conferred, not by the

<sup>k</sup> See Archbishop Whately on the Kingdom of Christ, Essay II. § 30, p. 177. (First Edition.)

<sup>1</sup> Even in England, and in the last century, Archbishop Secker, and Bishop Butler, had probably received only what is sometimes called Schismatical Baptism.—Compare Bingham, Eccles. Antiq. b. ii. ch. x.

Bishop alone, but by the laying on of the hands of the Bishop and the Presbytery. This is important, when the MINISTERIAL succession alone is regarded. And when the purity of the EPISCOPAL succession is the question, what shall we witness to-day?—not one but three of the Episcopal order joining in the conveyance of the Sacred Commission to the Bishop elect. Such a practice, if constant, will go very far, we may presume, to exclude the supposition of one invalid consecration, if such there were, invalidating also all that succeeded. Yet we know at once, from the very date of the Office for the day, that in the Church of England at least, during the last three centuries, such a provision has existed, and, we cannot doubt, has been operative. But the Rule itself is long anterior to the Reformation. If it was sometimes not observed, as in the consecration by Augustine of the first Bishops of London and Rochester, the exception, formally permitted, shows the general observance of the Rule. The same may be said of occasional exceptions in early times recorded, and censured, as irregular. The Rule itself, meanwhile, was declared by several Councils;<sup>m</sup> and we trace it, in fact,—and with it we may even trace the substance of our Consecration Office,—to what are called the Apostolical Canons and the Apostolical Constitutions; that is to say, according to the received opinion of

<sup>m</sup> The Rule, namely, that three Bishops should be present: the Apostolical Canon, as it was called, allowing two or three.

learned men, to the third century of the Christian era ; and so, probably, to a period anterior to the darkness, the turbulence, the irregularities which are supposed to make the purity of the Episcopal succession utterly improbable.<sup>n</sup> Connecting, therefore, facts like these with that acknowledged reverence with which sacred offices were surrounded in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, (sufficiently attested, for example, by the language of Ignatius,) and again with the practice of the imposition of hands, in conveying a Sacred Commission by Apostles and Presbyters in Apostolic times, and this even when the Holy Spirit had expressly designated particular persons to a special duty :<sup>o</sup>—connecting together facts like these, we may easily confess the general truth of another position of the Church of England, immediately following what was cited before concerning the threefold offices of the Christian Ministry, “ which Offices,” she proceeds, “ were evermore had in such reverent estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same ; and also by Public Prayer, with Imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful

<sup>n</sup> See Bingham, *Eccles. Antiq.* b. ii. ch. xi. § 4, &c. Heylin’s *Hist. of Episcopacy*, ch. i. § 7 ; and Bishop Beveridge’s *Annotations on the First of the Apostolical Canons*.

<sup>o</sup> Acts xiii. 2, 3.



authority." Not, of course, that the Church of England, in these words, maintains expressly the fact in question; for that was not their immediate object; but she implies the general truth of such a reverent observance of Apostolic order in the conveyance of sacred offices, as would render their pure and unbroken transmission from the days of the Apostles to our own, not, I admit, in every instance a fact either proved, or capable of proof, yet not improbable.

II. Here, then, let us turn from Facts to DOCTRINES; and let us inquire succinctly what are the views concerning the Apostolic Succession which we are required to hold, or are at liberty to teach.

But, in truth, it is somewhat difficult to ascertain exactly what are the received opinions upon the subject. The phrase is continually met with, but unexplained; and various and even opposite opinions are entertained by Members of the same Church. Some appear to uphold Episcopacy without reference to any Succession; others rest every claim to Apostolic Order upon an Apostolic Succession. To what extent the purity of this Succession is maintained as a fact is often doubtful, but the truth of the fact, to some extent, being assumed, some assert, without hesitation, the absolute invalidity of every other than Episcopal Ordination; some urge the more than

probable inefficacy of the Sacraments received from any other hands than those of the duly Ordained Minister; whilst the greater number, perhaps, rather suggest than assert this awful danger, upon the authority of approved Divines.

If this, or something like this, is a just representation of the state of conflicting opinions upon a subject of so much moment, it is very far from satisfactory. And we should endeavour, as it should seem, to obtain sufficient answers to two practical questions: What is *right*? What is *essential*? How far an unbroken succession of Episcopally-Ordained Ministers is essential to the very being of a Church, or the efficacy of the Christian Sacraments; how far a Succession is in itself right, and sound, and scriptural?

1. True, the question whether the Apostolical Succession is *essential*, manifestly affects the state of others rather than our own; yet I venture to call it a practical question, because it is intimately blended with our duty towards others—and towards how many millions of our brethren at home and abroad?—Doubtless if we have good grounds for believing that Foreign Churches, or our Dissenting brethren, are in imminent peril, we are bound to lift up our voices, and loudly and earnestly proclaim their danger. But if we rather suspect than know the danger, if we only repeat the opinions of others, and have no settled belief of our own

upon the subject, then let us consider carefully whether it falls within our province to condemn our brethren, upon grounds which we have not ourselves ascertained. But this by the way; for, awful and mysterious as it will be, if indeed so many millions of men, so many National Churches, are without a Ministry and without Sacraments, still we are surrounded with awful mysteries; and their condition, however perilous, will not disprove the truth of the most rigid doctrine of the Apostolical Succession. Nor again will the doctrine be disproved, by its being utterly powerless to produce its supposed effect. If no one can be secure that he receives the Eucharist, except at the hands of a Priest Episcopally ordained, and the commission must have been transmitted without any defect in the chain from the Apostles themselves to this individual Presbyter, who is there after all in any Church of Christ who can attain to this security? It is no act of Christian faith to believe a point of Ecclesiastical History which cannot be proved. How many are there in England who have heard the traditionary rumour of an objection to the Succession of the Bishops in this Reformed Church, who know not, and cannot know, any thing of its refutation. And what if, many centuries hence, the tradition of the objection should outlive the historical evidence by which it is disproved? The very circumstance, indeed, that the security of Christians in the effi-

cacy of the Christian Sacraments must needs be continually *diminished* as time advances, is no inconsiderable presumption against the doctrine, that a strict Apostolical Succession is essential.

But with us a much stronger presumption against it, although still only a presumption, ought to be the silence of the Church of England. Declaring, in the clearest terms, what she judged *right* for herself, she carefully abstains from asserting that the Apostolical Order which she preserved is *essential* to the being of a Church. That her Services of Consecration and Ordination are complete, and not ungodly ;—that all her Ministers Ordained accordingly are rightly Ordered and Consecrated,—she maintains modestly, but without reserve.<sup>p</sup> That none but those who are thus ordered, or who have formerly had Episcopal Consecration or Ordination, shall be accounted lawful Ministers in the Church of England, she explicitly declares. She is distinct and precise as to the method to be pursued, both “that these Orders may be continued,” and that they “may be reverently used and esteemed in the Church of England.”<sup>q</sup> And all this definite and unreserved declaration of what she accounted right for herself, renders the contrast so much the more marked, when her statements concerning “the Church,” and concerning “Ministering in the Congregation,” and “the Unworthiness of

<sup>p</sup> Art. xxxvi.

<sup>q</sup> Preface to Ordination Services.



Ministers," are so framed and cautiously guarded, that, excluding indeed the ministry of self-appointed Teachers, (which would be destructive of all order, and overthrow the very nature of a Christian Society,) they apply to any Church, and the Ministry of any Church,—nay, might even apply to Congregations of Separatists, who had conscientious grounds for their separation.<sup>r</sup> And this we are wont to ascribe, perhaps, to the great charity and moderation of the Church of England. Yet would it really deserve these excellent names, had the great and good men to whom we owe her Articles and her Polity, been indeed convinced that her Orders were essential to Christianity, and Episcopacy necessary to the very efficacy of the blessed Sacraments? Rather let us say, that they did not declare this doctrine, because they did not believe it to be true; or, at the least, that they could not declare this doctrine, because they had no Scriptural warrant for asserting its truth. "Christ's Gospel is not a Ceremonial Law;" that was a position clearly before the minds of our Reformers.<sup>s</sup> But even had the Gospel been a Law of Ceremonies, or so far as it has any Ritual, or Ceremonial, or any other Positive Institution, still, before we may assert that any Positive Institution is *essential*, we must have some clear warrant of Revelation for

<sup>r</sup> Arts. xix. xxiii. xxvi.

<sup>s</sup> Preface to the Liturgy (1548.) "Of Ceremonies, why some be abolished and some retained."

our assertion. This appears to be the true reason why the necessity of any Apostolical Succession cannot be maintained. If it be admitted that the whole doctrine of the Succession relates not to an eternal truth, but to a Positive Institution, in its own nature alterable, nothing less than the clearly declared will of its Founder can make it unalterable and essential. But we look in vain to Holy Writ for any clear warrant for this doctrine. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."<sup>t</sup>—Were the doctrine clearly warranted by the inspired Scriptures, would Divines rely upon texts like these to prove it? As if, because our Lord undoubtedly sent forth His Apostles as the Father had sent Him, therefore He gave them a commission altogether like His own, and a similar transmission, and no other, of the same authority must be continued for ever;—or as if, because it is justly argued that the abiding presence of Christ is not promised only to His Apostles, but to the Church through them, therefore it is promised only through those who should succeed in one, and one only way to a portion of the Apostolic office.—Until some authority from Holy Writ shall be produced, far more express and clear, not merely to prove the use or the need of a Christian Ministry, (which is not the present question,) but declaring that an Episcopal Succession is essential to a true

<sup>t</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. John xx. 21.

Christian Ministry, and a Ministry essential to the efficacy of the Blessed Sacraments, it is not for us, I apprehend, to be more peremptory in our assertions than the Scriptures themselves, nor must we call that essential or unalterable, which has not been declared to be so by our Lord or His Apostles.

2. But if this be true; if the Orders, the Appointment, the Functions of the Ministry are so far left at large, that we may not presume to determine that they are absolutely unalterable and essential, are they therefore indifferent, or to be altered at our pleasure or our caprice? Or is it even difficult to ascertain what is in all these matters *right, and sound, and scriptural*?—Nothing can be further from my meaning, more opposite to the sense of the Church of England, nor more remote, if I mistake not, from the truth.

For here again, the very nature of a Positive Institution determines the character of the proof; and what we could not prove to be essential, is easily discovered to be Scriptural and right. No Positive Ordinance or Institution being, of its own nature, of necessary obligation, we require some clear intimation from above to make it so; and clear intimations, accordingly, of the will of God, or even express and literal commands to this effect, have been from time to time vouchsafed, as in the instances of the Mosaic Ritual, and the Christian Sacraments. But because a Ritual or an Ordinance

might have been right and good, with or without any Divine appointment, therefore the slightest intimations of the Divine will, the passing allusion, or the mere historical notice of the fact, are abundantly satisfactory to the pious mind, show us the path of duty, and at once confer upon the Ordinance the highest sanction.

And we have this, and much more than this, in the case before us. Not only is it manifestly revealed that Christianity shall be for ever embodied in a living Society ; and a Religious Society implies Rulers and Teachers, and Sacred Services imply Administrators ; but a Form and Constitution, and, in every thing essential, the Constitution and Form which we inherit at this day, were presently given by the highest authority to the first Christian Churches. Their Rulers and Teachers, moreover, were always “sent;” they did not act without an express Appointment and Commission ; and that Commission not derived immediately from the whole Society, but from other authorities, superior to the persons appointed.<sup>u</sup> The most emphatic warning is given by the Apostle to all who would wilfully reverse this method, to all who would “not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts would heap to themselves teachers.”<sup>x</sup> As, therefore,

<sup>u</sup> Matt. ix. 38 ; x. 16 ; xxii. 35 ; (cf. x. 40 ; xv. 24. John iv. 34 ; v. 23, 24, &c.) John xx. 21—23. Acts i. 24 ; vi. 3 ; ix. 15 ; xiii. 2, 3, 4 ; xxii. 21. Rom. x. 15. 1 Cor. 1. 17.

<sup>x</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 3.



Christ sent His Apostles, so they laid their hands upon Deacons first, and then appointed Elders in every city; and finally, before their departure, committed to others a portion of their own authority of superintendence; and these also were to appoint Elders, and commit to faithful men for the future instruction of believers, "the things which they had learned."<sup>y</sup> Thus the Scriptures themselves bear witness to an Apostolical Succession. And when we look upon the existing Three-fold Ministry of our own portion of the Universal Church, even this we trace back by the clear light of History, in consequence of such a method of Succession, to the very age of the Apostles: we observe such a Ministry established by them; we behold that sanctioned, no other enjoined, no anticipation of events to come which should require a change; and we are thus abundantly satisfied that such a Ministerial Constitution is now, as ever, right and Scriptural, Divine in its origin, and consonant with the intention of our Lord.

True, it follows, that if this be right, although not essential, other Ecclesiastical Constitutions may be wrong. And we lament, accordingly, that any diversity of judgment, or any necessity, real or supposed, should have occurred to mar the symmetry of Christian Churches and interrupt their

<sup>y</sup> Acts vi. ; xiv. 23 ; xx. 28. 1 Tim. i. 3, 4 ; iii. 1, &c. 2 Tim. i. 6 ; ii. 2. Tit. i. 5 ; ii. 15 ; iii. 10.

unity. What was good and right under the Apostles, nay, as all must admit, was *best* for the then condition of the Church, must be good and right still, unless altered circumstances demand a change. Therefore theirs is no light responsibility who introduce a change. The burden of proof that such a change was requisite must rest with them. But this is widely different from denying the validity of their Orders, or doubting the efficacy of their Sacraments. Nay, as to the efficacy of the Christian Sacraments, although no reasonable person questions the propriety, I had almost said the necessity, of restricting their administration to persons duly appointed; yet we have no warrant to ascribe their efficacy in any way to the office of the administrator. The Church of England has, indeed, been sometimes supposed to hold a different language. But whilst she has said, and reasonably said, that “we may use the ministry” even of unworthy ministers, “both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments,” because they minister “not in their own name, but in Christ’s,” and “by His Commission and Authority;” nevertheless she has not ascribed “the effect of Christ’s ordinance” to their Commission, but has stated expressly that the Sacraments are “effectual because of Christ’s institution and promise,” though ministered by evil men.<sup>z</sup>

The Church of England, in a word, has not ruled

<sup>z</sup> Art. xxvi.

a point of faith beyond the Scriptures; and the Scriptures maintain upon the subject an expressive and instructive silence; and chiefly, which is remarkable, upon the connexion of that Sacrament with the office of the Priest, which has been the most rigidly confined to his administration. “The cup of Blessing which we bless.”—Suppose, what appears extremely probable, that the Apostle, when he was present, blessed the cup, or the presiding Presbyter in his absence; we cannot infer from this that it might not be blessed by any other. “We are stewards of the mysteries of God.”—Be it so that “mysteries” here relate to the blessed Sacraments—which is, however, most uncertain—and that none but the Presbyter, subsequently at least to the disorders at Corinth, was accustomed to dispense the Eucharist, which is most probable, this does not prove that its efficacy is made to depend upon his administration, and that it may not be dispensed by others. “Do this in remembrance of me.”—Still less does it follow that a sentence like this addressed by our Lord to His Apostles concerning that *commemoration* of His Sacrifice, which should be as dear to every Christian as to them, affects the *administration* of the Rite by themselves, or by those alone who derive a Commission from their Successors.<sup>a</sup> What, therefore, if some of our own, or of much earlier Divines,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Cor. x. 16, &c.; iv. i. (cf. 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.) Luke xxii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 24.

if Hilary or Jerome, or even early Councils,<sup>b</sup> have dropped incautious expressions, or held uncompromising theories upon the point; or what if Ignatius may appear to have laid it down that there is no valid Eucharist without the administration of the Bishop, or of one to whom the Bishop has committed the charge; nevertheless, this is not sufficient authority. Even assuming, what I apprehend is extremely doubtful, that they always intended to declare a Doctrine, and not merely to establish a point of Order, still neither their authority, nor any other, inferior to that of the inspired Scriptures, is of force to raise a point of Order into an Article of Faith.

III. Yet, lastly, let it not be conceived,—for we must bring this discussion, however imperfect, to a close, and no longer interrupt the solemn services of the day by any sounds of controversy—let it not be supposed, that anything has now been said against the propriety, the need, nay even the Apostolic or the Divine origin of the leading distinctions of Ecclesiastical Order; much less that we are not entitled to hope for the blessing of Heaven upon the several Offices of the Christian

<sup>b</sup> See Bingham's *Antiq.* b. ii. ch. xx. § viii. ; Ignatius, *Epistle to the Smyrneans*, § viii. ; and the Notes in Mr. Jacobson's edition, pp. 414, 415. Ignatius probably was not speaking of the *validity* of the Sacrament, but of Christian *unity* under the Bishop.



Ministry. Rather the considerations which have been suggested would appear not merely to enforce our duties, but to illustrate our Blessings, and Hopes, and Privileges.

It is a great and signal Privilege that we have received by inheritance, together with Apostolic Truth, the very structure of Apostolic Order. We have not to form a Church, and devise a Ministry, nay, not even to renew or reconstruct them. Christ Himself instituted His Church, and began to give it Pastors and Teachers; His Apostles continued and expanded what their Lord began; and what they completed, that we have received. We are careful indeed not to perplex the faith of Christians with unnecessary scruples. Whether an exact personal Succession of Episcopally-Ordained Ministers can or cannot be proved, we do not inquire; yet we are assured that the Institution itself has descended by an evident succession, even from the Apostles to ourselves. We delight to behold the flowing stream, and trace that to its sacred source: we do not stay, or care to count the separate drops.

Nor again do we presume to determine that any form of Ecclesiastical Constitution is essential to salvation, or necessary to the efficacy of the blessed Sacraments; but we account it a blessed privilege to have inherited a Sacred Institution, which we know to have been once the best, and believe to be

the best still, and are devoutly thankful that what St. Paul and St. John appointed and approved, that we have been permitted to retain ; alleging no necessity which might excuse a change, and by God's good Providence never driven to any separation from the Universal Church, which might require one.

Therefore also we look with steadfast faith to the blessing of Almighty God upon the Ministers of the Church, and upon all their peculiar ministrations,—the Word or the Sacraments which they dispense, the Absolution which they pronounce, the Rule which they bear. Never, indeed, let us confound the means with the end, the form with the substance, the part with the whole ; never put the Church for Christ, or the Clergy for the Church, or the Constitution of the Church for Christian holiness and truth. Thankful children of the Reformation, we can never forget that the most firmly compacted outward order may not preserve internal truth ; nay, and it will ever fail, unless Apostolical Order be carefully combined with every other spiritual privilege, and the Scriptures are devoutly used, and valued above their uninspired interpreters, and the Sacraments honoured above their Administrators, and Christ above all. But this being so, the Church is doubtless entitled to expect and to pronounce the blessing of Christ upon His Ministers ; and she addresses the Elect

Pastor accordingly, as on this day, in the language of St. Paul, nay, she presumes to adopt the very words of her Saviour to His Apostles, nothing doubting that He will now and ever, of His infinite mercy, pour down His grace upon His Ministers, to strengthen them for the due discharge of the most responsible Offices which a human being can sustain.

Most mysterious it is indeed, that beings such as we are should be permitted to do anything towards the salvation of the souls of others, when nothing less than the sacrifice of the only-begotten Son of God could save our own. Yet, awful as it is, every man does and must continually affect, for good or for ill, the eternal interests of other men. And Christ Himself calls upon some to “watch for souls,” and in so doing to “save both themselves and those that hear them.”<sup>c</sup> Deeply must they feel their absolute need of strength from above for such a work as this. And who so deeply as those whom their Lord has called to the highest offices in His Church, who rule over vast and thickly-peopled Dioceses, but whose cares extend to other Churches, and the expansion and enlargement of our own; whose spiritual labours are not pursued uninterrupted and unimpeded, but amidst gainsayers and adversaries; amidst the manifold distractions of an overbusy age; amidst the claims of society, the claims, it may be the temptations, of literature and science, the fever of politics, the

<sup>c</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 16.

conflicts of party, the multiplied divisions of the Church, the vain contentions of an importunate and restless Theology. Called to the Councils of the Nation, how frequently have they deplored their inability to secure the aid of Christian Statesmen in the cause of Christianity. Living centres of Christian unity, yet presiding over Churches distracted with every form of disunion; nay, sometimes, even amongst their own Ecclesiastics, scarcely able so to moderate controversy, as not to hasten Schism. The springs and guides of Discipline and of Edification, yet compelled too frequently to mourn over the utter inadequacy of the means of Spiritual Instruction to the spiritual wants of their people, and year after year to lament the decay of Discipline,—nay, almost to restrict its very name to the regulation of their Clergy, instead of the government and edification of their Churches, the whole flock of Christ committed to their charge. No considerate and conscientious Christian, I suppose, has ever filled the highest stations in the Church of England without many a painful feeling of dissatisfaction.—And then how short the time! A few years—it may be a few short months; the manifold duties of a chief Pastor of the flock but just commenced, and the expressions of friendly anticipation almost interrupted by the sounds of mourning!<sup>d</sup>

<sup>d</sup> Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth, D.D. consecrated Bishop of Chichester, September 22, 1840, died January 7, 1842.



But amidst whatever difficulties or discouragements, this is the cheerful language of the Apostle, and it is the blessing and privilege of the Church of England, that she may adopt it with unwavering faith,—“ Stir up the gift of God which is in thee ;” and that gift no mystical transmitted virtue, but that unspeakable gift which, though it transcends all thought, is yet the common inheritance of every faithful Christian, even the grace of “ the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us ;”<sup>e</sup> given to all according to their duties and their use of it ; given to the Christian Minister especially for his especial duties, and equal to all his needs, if rightly sought and used ; “ for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Nay, and however short may be the period of duty and trial, nevertheless, under this heavenly aid, something will have been effected ; and the work itself is not stayed—it survives the hand by which it is wrought ; the great work of the edification and the extension of the Church of Christ is constantly proceeding, through the never-dying agency of an Apostolic Ministry continued for ever, and ever growing with the growth of the Church herself, under the abiding blessing and presence of her Lord.

And, finally, just so far as we all, in our appointed

offices, stir up the gift which is in us through the laying on of hands, and show forth the work of the Spirit, may we hope to perpetuate and extend the Institutions which we revere ; recommending them by their fruits ; not, indeed, concealing nor extenuating their Apostolic, their Divine original ; yet without endeavouring to enforce them upon less perfect churches, or even irregular communities of erring Christians, by any terrors which are not “ terrors of the Lord ;” recommending Apostolic Order by its genuine fruits. So may Almighty God bless our exertions to extend the saving privileges of the Church in deed as well as in name to our Country, our Colonies, to the World, still—to our shame it must be said—still lying in darkness ; and spread every where, together with Apostolic order, Christian unity, and truth, and peace, and holiness.

Now unto God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour, and praise, and majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

O Lord God Almighty, who didst endue thy holy Apostles with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost ; leave us not, we beseech thee, destitute of thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them alway to thy honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## NOTES.

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Page 2.

*No Sacraments without the Priesthood, no Christian Priesthood without Episcopacy, &c.*

THE extreme theory of the Apostolic Succession is thus stated by Mr. Law :—

“ I shall now, in a word or two, set forth the sacredness of the ecclesiastical character as it is founded in the New Testament ; with a particular regard to the power of conferring grace and the efficacy of human benedictions.

“ It appears therein, that all sacerdotal power is derived from the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour Himself took not the ministry upon Him till He had this consecration . . . . . When He ordained the Apostles to the work of the ministry, it was with these words—‘ Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’ Those whom the Apostles ordained to the same function, it was by the same authority : they laid their hands upon the Elders, exhorting them to take care of the flock of Christ, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers. . . . .

“ From this it is also manifest, that the priesthood is a grace of the Holy Ghost ; that it is not a function founded on the natural or civil rights of mankind, but is derived from the special authority of the Holy Ghost ; and is as truly a positive institution as the Sacraments. So that they who have no authority to alter the old Sacraments and substitute new ones, have no power to alter the old order of the Clergy, or introduce any other order of them.

“ For why can we not change the Sacraments? Is it not because they are only Sacraments, and operate as they are instituted by the Holy Ghost? Because they are useless, ineffectual rites without this authority? and does not the same reason hold as well for the order of the Clergy? . . . .

“ How comes it that we cannot alter the Scriptures? Is it not because they are divinely inspired, and dictated by the Holy Ghost? and since it is express Scripture, that the Priesthood is instituted and authorized by the same Holy Spirit, why is not the Holy Ghost as much to be regarded in one institution as in another? Why may we not as well make a Gospel, and say it was writ by the Holy Ghost, as make a new order of Clergy and call them His? . . . . .

“ From this it likewise appears, that there is an absolute necessity of a strict succession of authorized ordainers from the Apostolical times, in order to constitute a Christian Priest. For, since a commission from the Holy Ghost is necessary for the exercise of this office, no one now can receive it but from those who have derived their authority in a true succession from the Apostles.

“ We could not call our present Bibles the word of God, unless we knew the copies from which they are taken, were taken from other true ones, till we come to the originals themselves. No more could we call any true Ministers, or authorized by the Holy Ghost, who have not received their commission by an uninterrupted succession of lawful ordainers. . . . . As to the uncertainty of it (the uninterrupted succession) it is equally as uncertain as whether the Scriptures be genuine. There is just the same sufficient historical evidence for the certainty of one as the other. As to its not being mentioned in the Scriptures, the doctrine upon which it is founded plainly made it unnecessary to mention it. . . . .

“ The Clergy have their commission from the Holy Ghost: the power of conferring this commission of the Holy Ghost was left with the Apostles: therefore the present Clergy cannot have the same commission, or call, but from an order of men who have successively conveyed this power from the Apostles to the present time. So that I shall beg leave to lay it down as a plain, undeniable, Christian truth, that the order of the Clergy is an



order of as necessary obligation as the Sacraments, and as unalterable as the Holy Scriptures; the same Holy Ghost being as truly the author and founder of the Priesthood, as the institutor of the Sacraments, or the inspirer of those Divine Oracles. . . . . If, therefore, we have a mind to continue in the covenant of Christ, and receive the grace and benefit of His ordinances, we must receive them through such hands as He has authorized for that purpose, to the end we may be qualified to partake the blessings of them. For as a true Priest cannot benefit us by administering a false Sacrament, so a true Sacrament is nothing when it is administered by a false, uncommissioned Minister.”—(Law’s Second Letter to Bishop Hoadly, pp. 69—75. Ed. 1835.)

These are strong statements, but they are supported, as it appears to me, by proportionally weak arguments. And it is with much surprise and regret that I find this work still recommended in strong terms to Candidates for Orders by Professors in our Universities. A controversial work is scarcely the best adapted for Junior Students in Divinity, much less a work in which the author perpetually mistakes, unintentionally I have no doubt, the exact meaning of his opponent. This is the case to a remarkable degree in Mr. Law’s First Letter. In the Second and the Postscript to it, if he is more just in his censures upon Bishop Hoadly, yet it may even appear, from the foregoing extracts, how loosely he treats his subject, and with what an utter disregard of the relative amount of evidence for different conclusions. It is painful to see the genuineness of the Scriptures and the necessity of a strict Apostolical Succession placed on the same footing. Even if it were right to compare them at all, it is plain that we do *not* require, in the case of the Scriptures, to know the steps by which each edition was copied from its predecessor. And as to the Sacraments, it seems truly wonderful that any diligent student of the New Testament should compare the scriptural proof of their universal obligation with the proof, not of the necessity of a Christian Ministry, nor even of those ministerial orders which it is our blessing to have received, but of an exact unbroken succession of Ministers from the Apostles to every individual Minister in every Episcopal Church.

*The truth of the fact, to some extent, being assumed, some assert, &c.*

The truth of the fact is, I think, very commonly assumed in the most unqualified terms ; *e. g.* “ As to the *fact* of the Apostolical Succession, *i. e.* that our present bishops are the heirs and representatives of the Apostles by successive transmission of the prerogative of being so, this is too notorious to require proof. Every link in the chain is known from St. Peter to our present Metropolitans.” And from the truth of the fact thus assumed, with reference to the English Succession, the writer proceeds to assume its truth “ all over the world,” and so passes on to the Doctrine : “ Here, then, I would only ask, looking at this plain fact by itself, is there not something of a Divine Providence in it ? Can we conceive that this Succession has been preserved all over the world, through many centuries, *for nothing ?* Is it wise or pious to despise or neglect a gift thus transmitted to us, in matter of fact, even if Scripture did not touch upon the subject.” —(Tracts for the Times, No. vii. p. 2.)

And if the question only affected our *privilege* and our *duty*, what member of the Church of England would not cordially agree with the writer of the Tract and his Colleagues ? But unfortunately, these writers do not commonly rest here. After a description of Episcopal Ordination, we are told (Tract i. p. 3) that “ we must necessarily consider none to be *really* ordained, who have not *thus* been ordained ;” and that the Church of England is the “ only Church in this realm (here in Britain) which has a right to be quite sure that she has the Lord’s body to give to His people.” (Tract iv. p. 5.) One of the two original principles, indeed, of these writers appears to have been to maintain “ the doctrine of Apostolic Succession as a rule of practice ;” which, it should seem, involved the notion that the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is “ conveyed to individual Christians *only* by the hands of the Successors of the Apostles and their delegates ;” or, as it was afterwards more deliberately expressed, “ The only way of salvation is the partaking of the body and blood of our sacrificed Redeemer. The mean expressly

authorized by Him for that purpose is the holy Sacrament of His Supper. The security by Him no less expressly authorized for the continuance and due application of that Sacrament, is the Apostolical Commission of the Bishops, and under them the Presbyters of the Church.”—(Mr. Perceval’s Letter to the Editor of the Irish Ecclesiastical Journal.)

It is superfluous to add how deeply I lament this apparent revival, by learned and pious divines, of the Theology of Mr. Law. The more earnestly I concur in their objects, that is to say, the more I desire to see a due appreciation of the value of the Church as a sacred Institution, (of the Church properly so called, the whole body of Christ, not the Clergy alone,) and the universal adoption of that Apostolical constitution of the Church which we ourselves inherit, the more seriously must I lament the advocacy of Sacerdotal claims not founded, as I think, upon Holy Scripture, but rather repugnant to the genuine principles of the Gospel, and calculated to delay indefinitely the general reception of Apostolical Order, and the Unity of the Christian Church.

But I would fain hope that such passages as have just been cited, exhibit somewhat exaggerated statements of the views of the writers alluded to. Their principles, at least, appear to be set forth with more caution and mildness in subsequent publications, as in the Tract No. lxxiv., professing to give “the testimony of the later English writers to the doctrine of the Apostolical Succession ;” where the Preface speaks of adherence to an Apostolical Church as “among the ordinary duties of a Christian,” and “as the means of his appropriating the Gospel blessings with an evidence of his doing so not attainable elsewhere ;” whilst many or most of the writers adduced do not by any means assert the rigid principles of the Succession expressed above. Archbishop Bramhall, *e. g.* an authority often quoted on this subject, cites and approves the Bishop of Winchester : “Nevertheless if our form (of Episcopacy) be of Divine right, it doth not follow from thence that there is not salvation without it, or that a Church cannot consist without it. He is blind who does not see Churches consisting without it ; he is hard-hearted who denieth them salvation. We are none of those hard-hearted persons, we put a great difference between these

things. There may be something absent in the exterior regiment which is of Divine right, and yet salvation may be had." And then he adds, "This mistake proceedeth from not distinguishing between the true nature and essence of a Church, which we do readily grant them, and the integrity or perfection of a Church, which we cannot grant them, without swerving from the judgment of the Catholic Church."—(Vindication of Grotius, Discourse iii.)

There are many advocates, in a word, for the Apostolical Succession, and these quoted in the Tracts for the Times, who do not run into the two mistakes common with those who uphold the extreme doctrine; neither assuming, for it is only an assumption, the *necessary* connexion between the office of the Minister and the efficacy of the Sacraments; nor supposing that the arguments which prove Episcopacy, or an Episcopal Succession to be *right*, and much more than right, (see the next note,) prove it also to be *essential*.

Dr. Arnold has some excellent remarks upon the mistake of the writers of the Tracts for the Times in making the Apostolic Succession the foundation of their system, in the Preface to his last volume of Sermons, (1841.) And upon the whole subject, see Archbishop Whately "On the Kingdom of Christ." Having had the advantage not long since of reading both these works, I am probably more indebted to them than I am aware of, or can acknowledge.

On the other side of the question, the most remarkable Publication of recent date (but I had not the benefit of reading it until after this Sermon was preached) is the work upon "Church Principles," by Mr. Gladstone, M.P. for Newark. (1840.) In the Fifth Chapter, and again in the Third Section of the Seventh Chapter, he treats expressly of the Apostolical Succession; writing with abundant learning, and in an excellent spirit; and free, of course, from every professional bias, neither tempted unduly to magnify the office of the Christian Minister, nor, from any affected liberality, to depreciate it unduly. As to the Fact, Mr. Gladstone does not maintain the absolute certainty of an uninterrupted Succession, admitting a *chance* of defect, but reducing it to something exceedingly minute. (Chap. v. § 48.) As to the Doctrine, his object apparently, in the Fifth Chapter,



is to prove an Episcopal Succession, by exact derivation, to be essential to the validity of the Christian Ministry, and that essential to the efficacy of the Sacraments; but I think he has only succeeded in proving that an Episcopal Succession is the most Scriptural, and the best method by which the Ministry can be continued. And in this I entirely agree with him. Why, indeed, the advocates for the exclusive theory do not succeed in proving more than this, may partly appear in the following note. But in the Seventh Chapter Mr. Gladstone makes exceedingly large deductions in favour of Foreign Non-Episcopal Churches, on account of the "necessity under which they have acted, and the intermediate and provisional nature of their arrangements;" and again, in favour of pious members of other Christian Communities, who may be members of the invisible, though not of the visible Church, having an "invisible union with the body of the Redeemer," but not "a sacramental union."

Hence I am willing to hope that the ultimate difference between the views of this writer, and those which are here adopted, is not so great as might appear at first sight. But the extreme statement of Church Principles seems very nearly to involve its own destruction; and the exclusive theory of a Succession would appear to make it essential indeed to a Church, but a Church not essential to Christianity, or to our communion with our Lord. For thus, according to Mr. Gladstone, "by God's inscrutable means, the process may be wrought out, whereby men are truly in His Church, and yet not in it by virtue of belonging to such and such a society, which may be wanting in the essential characteristics of a Church." And "membership of the invisible Church, though it does not imply membership of the visible Church, implies something more, inasmuch as it implies that the relation to the Redeemer exists, not merely in its initial form, but that it has been developed and rooted in the faculties of the man, and in the entire range of his character."—(Church Principles, ch. vii. sect. iii. § 87, 91, 92, 93, &c.)

Page 20.

*Show us the path of duty.*

Nothing, I think, can be plainer than *our Duty* in this whole matter. In the Sermon itself I had occasion to dwell principally



upon our *Privilege* in possessing the inheritance providentially handed down to us of Episcopacy, and the whole form of Apostolical Order ; but assuredly it is no less our bounden *Duty* to preserve what we have thus received. It seems obviously our duty, indeed, to adhere as nearly as circumstances will permit to the very form of the Church established by the Apostles, simply because it was so established by those who had the mind of Christ. It is not an alternative, as is often insinuated, between the belief of a doctrine and a question of *expediency*. If we neither assert, nor believe as a doctrine, that an Episcopal Succession is *essential* to the being of a Church, or the efficacy of the Sacraments, we do not therefore regard an Apostolical Institution as mere matter of decency and order, much less of mere expediency, open at all times to debate or alteration. In principle we hold that circumstances may excuse, nay, circumstances may require, an alteration ; but as the rule of our practice, we follow the Apostles, and believe it to be our duty to follow them as nearly as we can.

The model, however, which we should copy is not that of the Church *before* it had received a definite form under the guidance of the Apostles, and which, we may presume, was suited chiefly to the *age of Inspiration* ; but that Constitution which the Apostles bequeathed to us *at their departure*, which has no appearance of being adapted to the wants of any particular age or country, but may equally conduce to the edification of every branch of the Universal Church under the government of *uninspired men*. Mr. Irving's disciples are not the only persons who have neglected this obvious distinction ; the mistakes of the Independents, and of those who are Presbyterians, not by necessity, but upon principle, turn very much upon their neglect of it. But the Church of England has observed the distinction, has retained that form of Church polity which was the last sanctioned by the Apostles, and, clearly marking her sense of the importance of the duty, yet without any insinuation against the Orders or the Sacraments of other Churches, has decided that none but those who have been Episcopally ordained shall be accounted lawful Ministers "*in the Church of England.*"

In all this she only did what she was bound to do. And up to this point the writers upon the exclusive theory of the Success-

sion appear to have succeeded ; establishing the grounds of our duty upon the authority of Scripture, and failing only when they endeavour to show that those who have lost or rejected this Succession have therefore no valid Orders or effectual Sacraments.

They argue illogically, I think, when they would show from the Formularies of the Church of England that she is with them, and for this purpose bring the 36th Article and the Ordination and Consecration Services, (which distinctly declare what she thought *right*,) as a just comment upon the sense of the more reserved and abstract definitions of the Church and the Ministry, in Articles 19 and 23. All that is really proved is what, in the judgment of the Church of England, *ought* to be, not what *must* be. Had she judged her own Ecclesiastical Constitution, upon Scriptural grounds, essential to the being of a Church, she would have been to blame had she not explicitly declared her judgment.

But the principal ground of the mistake, if I may presume to say so, in the reasoning of these writers, is probably a misapprehension of the difference between the obligation under which we lie to receive an *Ordinance* and to believe a *Revealed Truth*. Let a Truth of Religion, such as the Divinity of our blessed Lord, be traced up to Revelation, and proved by Scripture, we are clearly bound to receive it as an Article of Faith. Doctrines may vary, indeed, in importance, but a Truth admits of no alteration ; we have only to believe, profess, and act upon it. But let an Ordinance, on the contrary, be traced up to Scripture, and be shown to have been established by the Apostles or by our Lord, the question is still open, whether it was intended or declared by Supreme Authority to be unalterable and of perpetual obligation ; for it *may* have been only best for that time or those circumstances.

But the writers in question assume that any Ordinance originally of Divine appointment is necessarily "*the Ordinance*"—the Ordinance, namely, for every age and all circumstances ; which is superadding to a Fact, which has been proved, a Doctrine which, without a Scriptural assurance to that effect, cannot be proved. I believe, *e. g.* Episcopacy to be a Divine Institution, and, seeing nothing to require or justify a change, believe

also that I ought to uphold and adhere to it faithfully and thankfully. Here is a line of duty marked out, but no Article of Faith laid down ; add that this Institution must be maintained, under all circumstances, as essential to the existence of a true Church, and you add a new doctrine without warrant from the only authority for a doctrine.

Page 23.

*An instructive silence ; and chiefly, which is remarkable, upon the connexion of that Sacrament with the office of the Priest, which has been the most rigidly confined to his administration.*

No doubt it must have been extremely difficult for converts to Christianity from Heathenism, or even Judaism, to divest themselves of habitual prepossessions, and not insensibly introduce into the new Religion more or less of their inveterate errors, moral or intellectual, affecting faith or practice. To this we may probably trace, in no small degree, that very remarkable change in the uses of words more or less technical, such as “mystery,” “offering,” “sacrifice,” “altar,” “priest,” which I noticed more at length on a former occasion, contrasting the different uses of the terms in the New Testament and in the early Fathers. (Sermon on the Ministry of Men, &c. pp. 15—22.) To persons deeply imbued with the Gentile superstitions, says a writer on the Apostolical Constitutions, “the Christian Minister would still appear as the Sacrificial Priest, the ἱερεὺς ; his Bishop as the supreme Pontifex, the Ἀρχιερεὺς ; and the bread which they broke, and the cup which they blessed, not as a mean of grace, conveying to the souls of the faithful the efficacy of the one great sacrifice once offered, but as a repeated sacrificial oblation (θυσία, the victim or Host) presented in order to obtain by its influence the objects of their prayers. The rite by which the catechumen was engrafted into the Christian Church became in such minds associated with the impressive forms of initiation into their former mysteries, and familiarly received the same title, Μύησις.” But would not both Jewish and Gentile prejudices concur in giving a sacerdotal character to the Christian minister, and a sacrificial character to the Eucharist, and thus tend to connect this Sacrament more than the other with the Priest’s office ?—

And yet in the New Testament there is more appearance of a strict connexion established between the Sacrament of Baptism and the Christian Minister, than between his office and the Eucharist.

Thus in the institution of Baptism, the administration of the rite might appear to be committed to the Apostles, (Matt. xxviii. 19 ;) and we afterwards find several notices of it, as administered either by them, or by persons acting under their ordination or direction, (Acts ii. 4 ; viii. 12, 38 ; x. 48 ; xvi. 33 ; xix. 5 ; 1 Cor. i. 14—16.) Whereas, of the Eucharist, among several notices of its celebration, we have no account by whom it was administered, nor is that point said to have been determined at the time of its institution ; unless indeed we restrict to St. Paul himself, or to the Minister, the Apostle's words, "The cup of blessing which *we* bless ; the bread which *we* break ;" which are not so restrained by the context : or unless we adopt a very forced interpretation of the injunction, "Do this in remembrance of me ;" explaining it not of the participation of the Lord's Supper, but of its administration and consecration. (Cf. Luke xxii. 20 ; 1 Cor. xi. 20—34 ; x. 16, 17 ; Acts ii. 42—46 ; xx. 7.) And it may be thought, perhaps, that forasmuch as Baptism opened the gate of the Church to the new convert, and the Eucharist only implied his faithful continuance in it, there was a stronger reason why the former should be more especially under the control of those to whom had been committed authority to bind and loose, and to remit sins ; for although the denial of the Eucharist sometimes implied exclusion from the Church, yet that appears to have been in certain cases, and to a certain extent, the common act of the authorities, and of the Society itself, which could judge of the outward conduct at least of its members, (Matt. xvi. 19 ; xviii. 18 ; John xx. 23 ; 1 Cor. v. ; Tit. iii. 10.)

Not that I am in the slightest degree impugning the rule which restricts to the Presbyter the consecration of the elements at the Lord's Supper. There are good reasons for the restriction, and the rule is very ancient, and may even be Apostolical. I am only speaking of the jealousy with which this particular rule is guarded, and even by those who would admit the validity of the other Sacrament when administered by Laymen. For this



peculiar jealousy there would seem to be no Scriptural warrant ; rather we may suspect that it has its secret source in Jewish and Pagan prepossessions, affecting the minds of early converts, and sowing the seeds of those grievous errors which at length corrupted Christianity with the notions of a human Priesthood, and literal sacrifices which they offered ; and which may even now, if we do not carefully watch our thoughts, exercise a traditionary influence upon the minds of Christians, far removed from those corruptions.

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*Alleging no necessity which might excuse a change, and by God's good Providence never driven to any separation from the Universal Church, which might require one.*

I allude, of course, to Dissenting Communities at home, and to the Scotch or other Presbyterian Churches, in reference to whose Members it is of extreme importance that we should not so extol our own privileges, as to deter others from seeking to share them. Our language and our theories would be of little consequence, comparatively, if they did not exasperate our brethren, and induce them to maintain upon principle what they had begun from necessity. And let it not be imagined that there is any thing in this sentiment which implies indifference to the truth, or any want of a thankful sense of our own high privilege, in the inheritance of Scriptural Order and an Apostolical Ministry. "No man," writes the Bishop of Llandaff, "is more firmly convinced than myself of the Apostolical Succession of Bishops and Presbyters in the Church of Christ ; and that it is the duty of every Member of that Church to conform to this rule, and to submit to their spiritual authority. Yet I do not feel myself justified in saying, that without a Bishop there is no Church,—that Presbyterian ordination is not valid,—that without Priests Episcopally ordained, the Sacraments cannot be administered, nor the Gospel preached. To decide peremptorily in such matters appears to me presumptuous and unwarrantable. To pronounce that those who depart from this rule are thereby excluded from the Christian covenant, I hold to be not only uncharitable, but impious."



Yet the same writer earnestly inculcates, upon our Dissenting brethren more especially, the sin and danger of indifference, and the duty of adhering to the Apostolical Constitution of the Church of Christ. "There is no *medium* in this question. To separate is either a duty or a sin. That there *is* a Church, founded and authorized, and spiritually governed, by Christ himself, is as true as that Christ came into the world, and suffered and rose again. That he enjoined all his disciples to preserve the unity of his Church, is equally certain. What the precise limits of this Church are, and how they are to be described in words, may perhaps be questioned. We cannot attain absolute certainty in this, any more than we can in a thousand other questions of the gravest interest to mankind. But though we may hesitate to say what is *not* a Church, we are quite sure what *is* a Church. It is a fearful thing to leave a certain for an uncertain path. Reason, and duty, and self-preservation all conspire in the conclusion, that when we know what is right, we are bound to follow it; and if we cannot reach the perfect pattern, that we are in all cases and in all circumstances to come as near to it as we can." (Bishop of Llandaff's Sermon at Usk. 1838. Appendix, pp. 30, 31.)

It is because I entirely concur in these sentiments, and earnestly desire the reunion of the Churches of Christ, and the restoration of a common Apostolical Order to all communities of Christians, that I deplore the revival of a tone of thought and language which tends indefinitely to prolong disunion, and to promote a repugnance and a resistance to that more perfect Ecclesiastical Constitution which we enjoy and revere. There is good reason to believe that this is the effect of our high language upon the Churches of Scotland and of Germany. It is but natural that it should be so. So long as we presume to pronounce their Ministerial Orders invalid, there is little likelihood of their seeking Episcopacy at our hands, or recovering it at all. In the words of the authority above cited, seeing clearly what *is* a Church, we go further, we frame arbitrary definitions, and, without warrant from Revelation, presume to determine what is *not* a Church. The Clergy of the Church of England formerly held different language toward their brethren on the Continent. (See Dr. Cardwell's Synodalia, pp. 721 — 723.)

How far, indeed, Foreign Churches either had or have a just excuse for their abandonment of Episcopacy, or in what cases, if any, Separation has been justified, and Christian Societies have been compelled of necessity to institute a new Ministry lest they should be deprived of Christ's appointed Sacraments, we cannot decide. Such cases are certainly possible, unless the Church is infallible, and Order is to be preferred above Truth. Here, however, the responsibility—and a grave responsibility it is—rests with them. But for *our* opinions and language *we* are responsible; and let us not become in a measure partakers of their fault by any incautious words or unscriptural theories which prolong the Separation, and even appear, either to represent a visible Church as of little moment to Christianity, or to set limits to the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to the blessing of Christ upon His Sacraments.

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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